

Religious Practice and Cohabitation*

"Let marriage be held in honor among all." Hebrews 13:4

Social science research shows that religious practice increases the chance that a person will marry. Likewise, research shows that less religious involvement increases the likelihood that a person will cohabit instead of marry, and that they will have a more favorable attitude toward divorce:

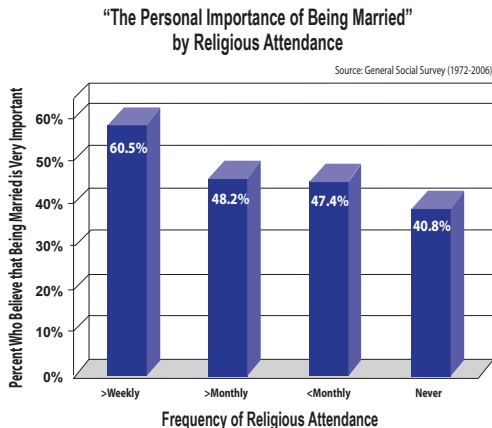
- The more frequently people worship the more likely they value marriage.
- Less religious young adults are more likely to substitute cohabitation for marriage
- Nearly one in four women currently cohabiting do not expect to marry their current partner, suggesting that they do not see cohabitation as a step into marriage but rather as a substitution.
- Young adults who cohabit before marriage are more supportive of divorce than those whose first union is marriage.

Unfortunately, an increase in cohabitation leads to a decrease in religious involvement:

- Young adults who cohabit tend to decrease their levels of religious participation and religious practice.
- Compared with peers who attended religious services several times a week, young women who never attended were seven times more likely to cohabit.

Given that worship protects good choices in relationships and sexual matters, what can you do to increase your family's religious practice, or to get a friend to begin to worship?

We see in the graph below that those who are religiously committed tend to grant more importance to being married. Worship is therefore sure to strengthen existing marriages as well as encourage a healthy marriage culture that can lead people out of the risks associated with cohabitation.



For links to the research behind these statements, please visit www.marri.us/one-pagers/

*It bears emphasizing that these patterns hold for the groups involved, not for all the individuals who make up each group. There is naturally a wide variation among individuals.



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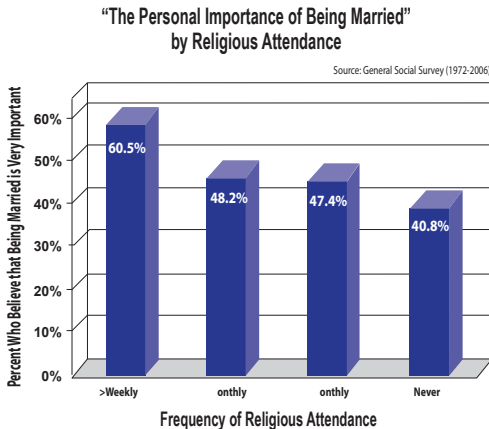
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